

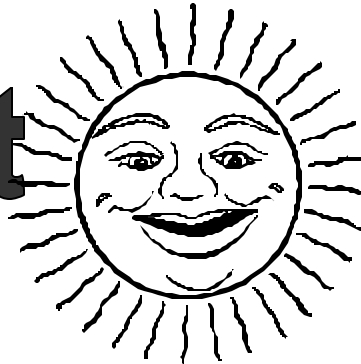


US Army Corps
of Engineers
Savannah District

Drought

Savannah River Basin Fact Sheet

Drought



What is a drought?

A drought is a prolonged period in which there is a serious shortage or deficiency of rainfall. Signs of a drought consist of hydrologic indicators such as streamflow, rainfall, reservoir storage levels, and groundwater levels. Although there are numerous theories about drought cycles, based on historic data there is no reliable method for forecasting drought.

In 1986 through 1989, the worst drought in recent history created severe water shortage conditions over extensive areas of the Southeastern United States. At the three Corps impoundments on the Savannah River – Hartwell, Richard B. Russell, and J. Strom Thurmond – inflows were some of the lowest recorded this century. Following this drought, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with input from the states of Georgia and South Carolina as well as the public, developed the Savannah River Basin Drought Contingency Plan – a tool designed to guide management actions during drought conditions in order to balance the negative impacts of a drought while at the same time recognizing the competing interests among authorized purposes.

The Contingency Plan established “Actions Levels” to be initiated when lake levels at Hartwell or Thurmond reach certain elevations, during specific times of the year. They are:

| <u>Level 1</u> | <u>Apr 18 – Oct 15</u> (Hartwell/Thurmond) | <u>Dec 1 – Jan 1</u> (Hartwell/Thurmond) | <u>Action</u> |
|----------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 656/326 ft. m.s.l. | 655/325 ft. m.s.l. | Public Safety Info |
| 2 | 654/324 ft. m.s.l. | 652/322 ft. m.s.l. | Reduce Thurmond discharge to 4500 cfs, reduce Hartwell discharge as appropriate to balance lake levels. |
| 3 | 646/316 ft. m.s.l. | 646/316 ft. m.s.l. | Reduce Thurmond discharge to 3600 cfs, reduce Hartwell discharge as appropriate to balance lake levels. |
| 4 | 625/312 ft. m.s.l. | 625/312 ft. m.s.l. | Continue level 3 discharge as long as possible, thereafter outflow to equal inflow. |

Today, the Savannah River Basin, as well as the entire Southeastern United States, is experiencing drought conditions again - resulting in lower than normal lake levels. One way that the Corps is able to reduce generation but keep up with the power demand during a drought is through “replacement power” - the practice of buying and selling other sources of power, thus reducing demand on Corps hydropower facilities. This has resulted in a savings of up to 6 feet of lake levels at both Thurmond and Hartwell Lakes.

To keep you informed, the Corps has developed a “Drought Information” website at: <http://water.sas.usace.army.mil/drought/main.cfm>. Check it out for the latest lake levels, projections, boat ramp closures, news releases, and more!

Hartwell Dam & Lake

P.O. Box 278
5625 Anderson Highway
Hartwell, GA 30643-0278
706-856-0300
1-888-893-0678
www.sas.usace.army.mil/lakes/hartwell

Richard B. Russell Dam & Lake

4144 Russell Dam Drive
Elberton, GA 30635-9271
706-213-3400
1-800-944-7207
www.sas.usace.army.mil/lakes/russell

J. Strom Thurmond Dam & Lake

Rt. 1, Box 12
Highway 221
Clarks Hill, SC 29821-9703
864-333-1100
1-800-533-3478
www.sas.usace.army.mil/lakes/thurmond